

## Ultima - Changed Me and the Gaming Landscape

I wrote a note in the ruins to a girl I had a crush on... I was prime age at the dawn of the video game revolution. Stand up arcade games gripped me when I was 7. I got my first Atari 2600 console when I was 8. I remember obsessing over the photo's in the Sears catalog longing for the electronic dreams that could possibly be mine. It was a passion and lust to have the interactive experience at home. If it was electronic and I was able to manipulate the outcome, I had to be a part of it. I developed a mental collection of all the video games I played, no matter what the platform. But after time, my sense of adventure and travel matured and my yearning for new quests and exploration grew. I did not want to stay on the road in Pole Position, I did not want to be held in 8-bit chunky walls. I wanted to expand.

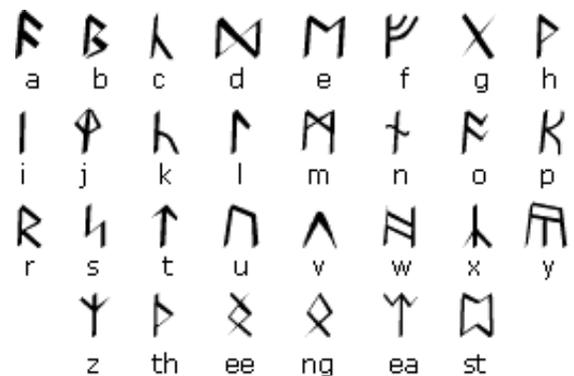
I spent some time growing up on a 520 acre ranch. It was a great place to grow up, the land had every sort of terrain an adventurer would want. There were fields, forests, hills, large rocks bigger than large rooms (with rumors of a cave with lost bank robbery treasure), ponds, creeks, and remnant of old houses from the early 1900's. My sense of exploration was peaked. I explored every inch of that land, but often thought, "why can't a video game allow me to explore a new world?" It was only months after when a friend of mine, who had an Apple II monochrom screen, introduced me to a game called Ultima. I was in 7th grade, and it was Ultima IV to be exact. The world of technology was rapidly evolving. I didn't have any way of knowing about advancements in general, and especially in some hick town. I prided myself on trying all things, but was now thrust into a new world of computer gaming.

Ultima IV will go down as my favorite game of all time. It was pivotal to my paradigm and my first role playing game (RPG). Ultima was an entire world that was given to you to explore, discover, complete quests, and ultimately solve the mysteries of the entire realm. Boundaries were no longer existence. I could go where I wanted, while battling creatures and collecting gold.

There were many towns scattered around the world to discover as well. Some on a clothe map that came with the game, some left to be discovered. Each town was even a whole new place to explore and discover. As you wondered, you interacted with the people of the town, picking up clues and hints about the world you were in, and working toward figuring out how to solve the genius planned complex game. By todays standards, the graphics were not much. But it was perfect, it still left enough to allow your imagination to run wild in fantasy and adventure.

I soon went back during high school and solved Ultima's I through III. But for some some reason I dont know, I never completed Ultima IV. I don't really know why, even logging countless hours or even days of gaming - I may try again soon. It is free on <http://gog.com>.

Ultima IV came with a map that was riddled with real Druidic ruins. I became so consumed with Ultima, I even memorized that Druidic ruin alphabet. And to embarrases my self more, I remember, in 9th grade, I wrote a note in the ruins to a girl I had a crush on. Well, luckily I never had the yarbles to actually deliver the note. I was also very certain one day I would work for Lord British at Origin... well.



Today, I am able to travel and explore for real. But whether I am in the streets of Tokyo or a castle

in Ireland, that same yearn for exploration is well intact. I get the same sense of satisfaction in traveling and fantasy. I travel abroad now, and I can thank video games in both - satisfying my natural instinct to travel and explore, as well as keeping that interest intact.

I would love to hear from anyone that had a similar experience.

-Adam